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COMPREHENSION,
More Properly than
ENTHUSIASM,
IN
DISTRESS.





COMPREHENSION,
More Properly than
ENTHUSIASM,
IN
DISTRESS;
PROVED BY
Mr. THOMAS MORGAN, a
Dissenting TEACHER.

And farther Explained, In
A Familiar LETTER to Himself.

That which is Solid and Sharp, being imp'd by something more Light and Airy, may carry further, and pierce deeper.

Rehearsal Transp. Part II. p. 81.



W. Webb (P.)
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K.

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A FAMILIAR
LETTER
TO
Mr. THOMAS MORGAN.

SIR,

A Friend of mine sending me lately your *Enthusiasm in Distress*, I soon run it over, and return'd it, with my Opinion, That I took it barely for an Essay of your Wit, shewing how well you can manage either Side of a Question, and banter your Reader into a Belief of what you scarce believe a Word of yourself.

Otherwise, How came you to treat the Learned and Ingenious Author of the *Reflexions upon Reason* (to whom I declare my self, in a manner, a perfect Stranger, except

cept from his Writings, and the Character he bears) in the awkward Magisterial Manner you do ? telling him it is not for such little Undertakers as *He*, to think of bringing the World to a better Understanding. No, that's for *Men* of suitable and very uncommon Abilities, of nice distinguishing Hands, such as, I suppose, you think your more Learned Self to be bless'd with ; and therefore *the only wise Man fit to venture at it.*

Just as if a House taking Fire, all the People of the Neighbourhood, Old and Young, Lame and Sound, should run as fast as their Legs and Crutches would let 'em, with a new-invented Engine, and such Utensils as came first to Hand, to quench it ; When in steps a strong lusty Man, crying out, in a great Surprize ; Bless me ! What Hospital has been deliver'd of all this Herd of Cripples ? Good People, fall back, you are of no Use here, you nor your Engine ; better go Home and watch your own Tenements ; or, if you will do us any Service, send such able-bodied Men as My-self in your Room, if you know where to find 'em. Whereupon one of the Company replies, with some Earnestness ; *Sir*, Can you blame us for offering our Help, when the whole Street is in Danger, and our Turn may be next ? Ay, but (says he) *we are to proceed in a Business of such Importance with great Judgment*

ment and Caution, in order to discover what mutual Relation, Connexion and Dependance there may be betwixt the several Springs and Movements of this new Contrivance. True, cries the other, would the Fire wait your Leisure, and not rage as it does ; There is no coming near it with Safety : If you think otherwise, you may try your Skill ; You are not the first *Hercules* has perished in the Flames.

Be judge yourself, Sir, Should a Man banter People at this Rate, with the Fire about his Ears, unless he had all the Firemen in Town at his Elbow, would they not conclude he had certainly Ensured for much more than he was worth, and expected to gain by the Combustion ? And for you to treat modest well-meaning Mens Schemes for Peace, with the Scorn and Disdain you do, looks as if you were pleased to see the World together by the Ears, and scratch and bite 'till the Blood comes, or had a *Nostrum* of your own, in a Corner, that will do the Trick all at once.

Well ! and so you have, may we take your Word for it ; only your Reader must look 50 Pages forward (when your whole Book, Title Page and all, is but 68) and even then so frugal and compendious are you in expressing a Matter of the last

Conse-

Consequence, that, unless he keeps a steady Eye, you may chance to give him the Slip ; for, like the *Iliads* in a Nut-shell, here's the whole at once. *The Church* (say you, p. 50.) might certainly leave Men to their *Liberty in Things indifferent*, and this is all that is desired. A modest Proposal, no doubt, and one would think it sufficiently complied with in the present Toleration, which you were, at every Turn, so ready to rebell for, 'till you had got it.

But, it seems, bare Toleration at this Time of Day will not do ; We are all Towns-born Children, and you know no Reason, after so long a Confinement to the Conventicle and Contribution, you should not have equal Right to the Churches, and see a Tythe-Pig at your Table, as well as other People, by the Parliaments establishing a **C O M P R E H E N S I O N**, that shall make *Oaths, Canons, Articles and Rubricks* as much Old Almanacks as the *Covenant* ; that henceforward, as the Churches fall void, a *Quaker* may get one, an *Arian* another, and so on, with the like Privilege to every new Sect a fruitful Age may produce. Sure, you will then allow the World in a hopeful Way : However, inasmuch as this noble Design of yours never had its Parallel since the Times of *Julian the Apostate*, it may

may not be amiss to enquire a little how the new Pudding may spend.

As for Hearers, that's out of the Question ; those that went to Meeting before, can't be so cross-grain'd not to follow their Teacher to Church, the only Difference being more Elbow-room, and better Conveniences to Sleep in. Nay, should the *Quaker* start at the *Steeple-House*, that's answer'd by altering the Form, which the Materials, without a Brief, will pay for.

If I mistake not, the chief Difficulty will be here, Whither shall the Church-Party go ? Who, if true to their Principles, must refrain the Church, for the same Reason they did the Meeting-House before ; and then I know but one Remedy they have ; and that is, To take a long Lease of your vacant Tenement, and hire a Preacher, at their own Charge, from one of our Universities, on this side *North-Britain*, to Officiate.

And should we do this, would not you laugh finely at us in your Sleeves, as you did at a late Monarch's believing, to his Cost, That they who had struggled hard to keep him from the Throne, and bid fair to pull him out of it, meant more than

B bare

bare Compliments in all their Addresses ; when dear-bought Experience convinc'd him how few Martyrs their Loyalty can boast of ; who singled out even Mr. *Love* for a Sacrifice, who had spent his Lungs and Estate in the Cause, in more Places than *Uxbridge*, and at last died with the very *Covenant* in his Mouth.

But, by the way, unless, as One observes, Men were lugg'd to Heaven by the Ears, Hearing is not all. There are still such Things as Sacraments in Being ; tho', Thanks to the Toleration, they have lost some Ground. Suppose then an honest Man, desirous of having his Child Baptized, should apply himself to the Minister of his Parish that happened to be a *Quaker*, What a Look, think you, would he give him, from under his Hat, and say, Prithee, Friend, go Home, and be serious ; If thy Child's Face be a little Dirty, the Nurse, or Maid, with a wet Rag, will make it as Clean as the best Water-sprinkler of 'em all.

Next to the *Arian* ;— Who, in more complaisant Terms, tells him, He thought * *the previous Question had set all People right as to*

Baptism; by proving it never intended to reach further than the Apostolical Age, unless where Infidels are Converted ; and, even then, adds he, I think it needless ; because, 'tis *Faith and Repentance* makes us Members of the Catholick Church ; therefore take Mr *Emlyn's*, and my Word for it, That, for some Years, at least, your Child is as much a Christian as any of us can make it.

Still, thinks he, I have two Strings to my Bow, and on he jogs to the *Presbyterian*, whom, at first, he finds all *Compliance* ; 'till, desiring the Benefit of the *Comprehension*, and his Child to be Baptized in the Manner the rest were, he mention'd the *Cross and Common-Prayer-Book* : Hereat, the Man starts, and looks pale ; telling him, with an Air of Displeasure, He mistook his Man : Tho' he, and his Friends, had long clamour'd for *Liberty of Conscience*, 'twas only to get the Power into their Hands, without any Thought of parting with an Ace of it : For, pray, says he, in the Reign of the *Long Parliament*, when we concluded all our Own, and daily prais'd God for the Success of Rebellion, did ever Men so scoundrel * and be-labour

* *Dissenters Sayings. Part II.*

Toleration, as we did ? Nay, at the Restoration, did we not send over our Orators to the * King, to advise him (*which at that Time we thought equal to a Command*) not to let his Chaplains use the *Surplice* and *Common-Prayer*, even in his own Chapel : And, truly, had we been aware in Time of his giving them the crusty Answer he did, the young Monarch had certainly waited another Season, before he had been Huzza'd, as he was, to *Whitehall* ; tho' we had stopp'd our Resentment against the Insolence of the growing Sectaries, which that Sudden Fit of Loyalty, we have since dearly Repented, ow'd its Rise to. Therefore, without more Words, if nothing less than the *Cross* and *Common-Prayer-Book* will content you, you must go further a Field ;

As he does to a Minister of the Church of *England*, living at a greater Distance, whom he had some Acquaintance with : He, taking him by the Hand, tells him, Old Friend, were you of my Parish, you should not ask me twice ; but as you are not, I am cautious of breaking in upon another Man's Charge, where I am sure to provoke those, that (just the Reverse of *Julius*

* *Clarendon's History.*

Cesar) are too apt to forget any Thing but Injuries, and seldom shew their Teerh, without Biting to the purpose: And so, Well fare *Comprehension*!

Thus we see how it is like to go with one Sacrament. And how the other may fare after a second Improvement of your *Calf* and *Dog*, I shall not take upon me to guess. But pray, *Sir*, speak out, Tho' you might never crave a Blessing at that Annual Solemnity, Did you not take your first lucky Hint from the *Calves-Head-Club*? And, to render the Act less odious, the other, from a certain Great Man's causing the Sacrament to be given to his Dog, an Animal, of late, so crept into Favour, that it has had more than *Pagan* Ceremony at its Interrment, from some whose Cause you so zealously Espouse, that you take it in Dudgeon to hear 'em call'd but *Pretty Gentlemen*? You may tell me, and I can't disprove you, That you never heard of the *Calves-Head Feast*, nor of the *Great Man's Dog*; but then you must give me leave to tell you, That good Wits are apt to jump, and that Eggs are Eggs in all Ages and Countries; and where Men are acted by the same Principles, they will always be known by their Fruits.

In Defence of this your *Unhoopable Doctrine* (to borrow an Epithet from your old Friend * Mr. *Marvel*) you urge, with great Strength of Reason, I confess, " That " Mother Church, as a tender Mother, " ought to take a prudent Care of all her " Children, and not to nourish the Strong " and Healthy only, and cast the Weak " and Sickly away. If a weak or sickly " Child has an Aversion to a particular " Dish, tho' perhaps it may be owing to " his Distemper, why should he be cramm'd " with it, or cast out of the Family, or " the Mother's Bosom, to perish for want " of Food, because he cannot feed as the " Strong and Healthy do ? No, God for- " bid ! " Sir, only, if you please, instead of Mother Church, for once we'll take a Father, whose Olive Branches running much on the Female Kind, he observes some of the younger Fry look pale, and off their Stomachs ; and, upon Enquiry, finds, they eat Salt and any Trash they can come at, nor do the Sluts deny it ; but, clinging about him, cry, Indeed, *Papa*, we do eat as you say ; but we love it, and it goes down good ; when Meat makes us Sick, till we Puke again. Now, pray, what

* Rehearsal Transp. *Pag. 1, 2.*

shall

Shall this Man do ? Shall he let 'em eat on, till it kills or cripples 'em, as one or t'other it rarely fails of ? or restrain 'em what he can, till a Physician, with proper Remedies, has so recovered their former Appetites, that they eat and look like the rest. Your Opinion, Sir, as a Man of Sense and Sincerity, and (as I am told) a little Piece of a Physician too, which of these two Childish Allusions think you most *a propos* ?

But, pray, how come you to argue at this Rate now ? Have you not, as I said before, your long wish'd-for Toleration ? May you not do as you please, and go where you list, without being call'd to Account ? Will nothing content you less than Establishing Iniquity by a Law, which shall infallibly usher in a Confusion, that, after * all his Victories in the Field, broke the Heart of you know who, only that you may fish again in troubled Waters, till your old Purchase of Church Lands is made good to you : Really, Sir, such Stuff as this, began to make me weary, and think of giving you up all at once ; as I had done, only I chanc'd to put my Finger on a Passage or Two, intended, without question,

for the brighter Parts of your Performance ; and therefore you may take it amiss, should they not be regarded accordingly.

The Author of the *Reflexions upon Reason*, having briefly said, That the Holy Scripture asserts *Three in Person, and but One in Essence*, any candid Reader, but your Self, would have seen he meant only by a necessary Inference, from several plain Texts, without making such a Flourish, as you do, with your *MS.* who, as it were, in the same Breath, are guilty of a much greater Blunder, not to say downright Falshood, in charging us with inseparably tacking the Cross in Baptism, to a Divine Institution : An Error your own Eyes must have convinc'd you of, had you but turn'd to the private Office. And for your *MS.* give me leave to return your Compliment, by saying, That if you, or any of your Friends, that have been industrious that way, can produce but one Ancient Copy, without sufficient Ground for the present Faith of the Church, and what it has been in all Ages, you will certainly do the Cause of Infidelity more Service than *Arius* and all his Journey-men, have hitherto been able.

To

To render your Plea for *Comprehension* unanswerable, you say, * *Whatever the Separation be betwixt the Conformists and Non-conformists, it is certainly mutual, and they both equally and alike separate from one another.* Nay, should you set the *Kirk of Scotland* upon our Backs, we must be in a bad Case, and hard put to't, to vindicate ourselves from Schism, by causelessly separating from them, a sound Branch of the *Catholick Church*; Nor, for my Heart, can I see how it should be otherwise, if, as you suggest, we are Unsound in Points both of Faith and Practice, have Flaws in our Constitution, loudly complain'd of by Men of our own Principles for great and sore Evils, needing Amendment; which, such is our Misfortune, we cannot set a Foot towards, having Sworn away all Authority to the Crown, given up, and subjected all the Powers and Spiritualities of Christ's Kingdom, to a Civil Jurisdiction, and are become, in Effect, according to your Representation, no Church at all, or at least, near a-kin to it. Very well, Sir, You see, tho' I have not taken your Words in the Order they lie, I am true to your Sense in

* Page 44.

the Abridgement: And now be pleased to hear a true Story.

In the late King James's Time, when the Romish Writers plainly perceiv'd the Pillars of St. Peter's shake, and Infallibility in Danger, to save their Credit, they gave out, How they were strangely misrepresented, and charg'd with Doctrines they utterly disown'd, and that, unless Justice were done 'em, they'd dispute no longer; But lest this should be construed a giving up the Cause, out comes an Artful Pamphlet, Intituled, * *An Agreement between the Church of England, and the Church of Rome*; maintaining, That *Rome* and we are old Crennies, and ought to shake Hands, and not differ about Trifles, when the Dispute lay only betwixt them and the Dissenters; who at that Time, Good Men! were as mute as Fishes, seldom opening their Mouths, unless to thank the King for illegally dispensing with the Laws, to bring in Popery. And all the Time we and *Rome* were at it, Tooth and Nail, without giving or taking Quarter on either Side, the Dissenters look'd on, and cry'd, *God bless his Majesty!* *We'll stand by him with our Lives and Fortunes!*

* Anno 1687.

Now

Now this Pamphlet, with which you seem much better acquainted than with our Liturgy, further observes, That ever since the Breach between us and the Protestant Dissenters, We, for our Parts, have had only the *Name and Shadow of a Protestant Church of England*; directly your Language: And that, 'till there be a *Catholic Determination of Schism*, one Church will ever be *spitting at another upon all Occasions*. — You again to a Hair. Wherefore, should some Blows pass between Us and the *Kirk of Scotland*, by your Instigation, there can be no taking up the Quarrel without an Umpire from *Rome*; the Necessity whereof as it is the Design of that Author to prove, so, believe me, for a Beginner, you seem bravely to Second him in the Argument, in saying, as you do, *That the Separation is certainly mutual, and that we equally and alike separate from each other*. Which, if it has any Sense, must be this, That as 'tis impossible for us to be both in the Right, so, by Consequence, we are both in the Wrong, and equally departed from the *Centre of Unity*, which I need not inform you where fixed by the Disciples of *Ignatius*.

Such Language from *Rome*, we all know, is no Novelty ; nor has been ever since we left it : But for You openly to charge us with *swearing away all Authority to the Crown*, looks too like a premeditated Stroke at the *Sapremacy*, and a denying the Magistrate the Power we allow him ; Much as if you were prepar'd to take Somebody to Task, and tell 'em what they must trust to, in these or the like Terms.

Sir King (so accosted *Wat. Tyler * Richard II.*) Pray, let You and We understand one another rightly : — So long as you *stroke us*, and *much us*, so long we can be civil ; but thwart us in the least, you will find us very Vixens. When Kings will be taking upon 'em, 'tis not the first time we have call'd 'em all † *The Devil's Bairns* : Nor, to stop their Pretensions to being Heads of our Body, left 'em not so much as a Head upon their own ; not allowing their Carcasses the common Rites of Christian Buryal. This is true, and the World knows it ; for, as § *Mr. Harrison* at his Tryal boldly told the Court, *It was not done*

* *Grafton Hew's.*

† *Sprotwood's History of Scotland*, Page 423.

§ A noted Regicide.

in a Corner: And should we ever play the Old Game over again, 'tis but saying, with a late * Great Writer, upon another Occasion, *That which is, is that which has been.*

But this, I foresee, you will say, is only Old Thread-bare Stuff, fit for none but the *Calves-Head Fraternity* to keep in Remembrance. Ay, ay, there 'tis! These Words, *Old, Ancient, Antiquity*, are strange Words: You can no more bear the Sound of them, than some the Sight of a *Cat*: Your Spirits run presently into such a Disorder, a whole Course of the *Jesuits Powder* will scarce reduce them. The Reason, if I mistake not, of your falling so heavy on that well-known Axiom of the Schools, cited by our Author for a most certain Metaphysical Truth, *viz. That nothing can be in the Understanding, that was not first in the Senses*, which, out of pure Spite to *Antiquity*, you call, *An old exploded senseless Axiom*, so far from being most certain, that there is nothing (say you) either of Truth or Common Sense in it.

Look-you, Sir, undoubtedly, you know as well as another, when Maxims and first Principles are deny'd, there's no holding up

* History of the Reformation, Part III, Page 244.

a Hand ; the only Remedy is, How far Experience and Matter of Fact, may help at a Dead Lift ? Therefore, if I may take the Liberty, Are you positive a Man that never saw a Shine, may draw to the Life, with the clar-obscure and all the Graces of a Finish'd Piece ? And another, that never heard a Sound, may both Sing and Fiddle to Admiration ? But because I conceive it not impossible for a Person both Deaf and Dumb to Paint, and no Rarity at all, to have a blind Man skill'd in Musick, if you please, we'll go a Step further : Suppose, one born both Blind and Deaf, were, as he grew up, committed to your Care to perfect him in Philosophy and the Mathematisks ; and, after a Course of some Years, should at the same Time recover both his Senses : As for *Sight*, the Operators tell you, 'Tis Part of their daily Practice, by Couching and Curing several that were born Blind ; And, for the *other Sense*, *Riverius* or one of the Faculty, writes of a Dumb Boy, that came to hear and speak from the Cure of an accidental Fracture in his Skull. Now, think you, this Pupil of yours would no sooner hear and see, than he would be all for Heights and Distances, talk of nothing but Simple and Complex Ideas, and have all the abstruse Terms and Propositions in the whole Circle at his Fingers Ends, to shew his strange Proficiency under a

Master

Master he never saw, nor heard one Word he said ? or rather, for a while, not know so much as his own Species, but have much of the Sheep or the Bear in him, according to the Texture of his Parts or Complexion ? If he would, then pray, Sir, *as you are stout, be more merciful* for the future, to a good Old Axiom, that had weather'd the Point for many a fair Season, and might so to the End of the Chapter, had not you, like a subtle *Duns Scotus*, knock'd it down all at once, with the Butt-End of your Blunder-buss. Notwithstanding, I make a Scruple after all, Whether it may not puzzle as profound a Philosopher as Yourself, to shew a Back-door to the *Understanding*, and give the *Senses* the Go-by.

My Reason, under Favour, in short, is this ; Were the Intercourse between the Visible and Ideal World obstructed, as with a witness it must be in one born Deaf and Blind, the Soul, for the Time, continues as quiescent and and unactive as before in the Womb ; and, by consequence, this Action, far from being so False and Nonsensical, as, in Contempt to our Universities, you and your *Neotericks* will have it ; Not considering, that the Notion of external Impressions only rousing the dormant Ideas, is full as groundless as any one Doctrine in all *Aristotle*, and his many Commentators ; and, for

for what has yet been demonstrated to the contrary, the * Learned Civilian was much in the Right, that *revera intellectus noster omnis cognitionis originem dicit a sensu etiam rerum insensibilium.*

To this settled Prejudice of yours against *Antiquity*, is manifestly owing the vigorous Assault you make upon the *Super-rational Spirit*; which, though you ingenuously own the Author gave you Leave to call as you please, yet because when you bite, you love to have your Teeth meet, you resolv'd to tye him down to his constituent Principle, as least able to abide the Force of your Battery: When I take the Question to be properly this, Whether barely a Whim of the Author's, or otherwise of long Standing, and only put into a Modern Dress? To prove it the latter, besides some Books of the *O.T.* and *Apocrypha*, he cites you several of the Ancients, which you wisely take no Notice of, and had he thought these not sufficient, besides Old *Aristotle*, he might have passed on to *Averroes* and *Avicenna*, 'till he had come down to the late † Dr. *South*; a Man, if I am not strangely misinformed,

* Jul. Pacii Comment. in Aristot. de *Animâ*, *Lib. III.*
Pag. 409.

† Sermons. Vol. III. Pag. 68.

never

never taken for an Enthusiast ; but you, perhaps, have the Secret of knowing Mens Opinions better than themselves, or any body else.

After all, I least expected *your* bearing so hard upon *Enthusiasm* of any Man living, because, you know, that within Memory, we had *Grace ! Grace !* and *falling from Grace !* in the Mouth of every *common Mechanick* that frequented a *Conventicle* ; and were their Teachers but desired to explain themselves, and speak so consistently, that one Part of Scripture might not contradict another, presently your Mouth was stopp'd with *Papist, Arminian, Socinian*, and other hard Names, *some sort of People* have great Store of at Command ; and then, truly, who but You and St. *Austin* ? Now, forsooth, nothing will down like the *New Philosophy* : *Scripture* and *Antiquity* begin to grow Stale, and *Baptism* and *Regeneration* such mere Trifles, that had You been Gentleman of the Horse to *Naaman the Syrian*, 'tis doubtful, after a long Journey to the Prophet, whether he might have return'd less a Leper than he went.

But, granting this *Super-rational Spirit*,
as Chymerical as you make it, is it the first

D

Time

Time a Writer has indulged his Fancy having such Plenty of Vouchers on his Side, you not assigning one single bad Consequence may flow from it? For, pray, would Publick Credit sink upon it lower than it did not long since? Would it set King and Parliament so at Odds, like * some Positions you know where to find, that a Civil Rupture might, in all likelihood, ensue? As, give me leave to tell you, must, without a Miracle, from your Scheme; Where all Parties are at Liberty in Things Indifferent, with an equal Right to resolve what shall come under that Denomination, which, unless allow'd, they are no Gainers by: Nor all you say, more than an empty Noise, to make the World believe us strange hard-hearted Creatures to deny you what, Experience has shewn, you could not long keep from the Ruin and Confusion must follow. But suppose you say, The only way is to try. Oh! Sir,

*Hoc Ithacus velit, & magno mercentur A-
tridae.*

* Vide Evang. Armatum.

Not a Jesuit among the many come short home, but would dye with the utmost Satisfaction to think that a Scheme like yours, were, by his Industry, in a fair way for an Establishment: And for the *Modern Hereticks*, you own you have the Honour to be acquainted with, and perhaps had a Sight of your Papers as they went to the Press, I conclude you have no great Reason to doubt *their* Approbation. Whilst the *Free-thinkers*, to go no further, would even burst to see Religion it-self was become indifferent, long before the several opposite contending Parties center'd in an Indifferency would please 'em all. Then, whether you might laugh for Company, would be spiteful to guess, had you not assured us, at the Close of your Letter, You could not forbear laughing at what you affirm more empty than your own Shadow.

Well! since you are such a laughing Gentleman, especially at *Antiquity*, though you may live to be *Old* your-self, 'tis pity to ruffle your gay Temper too much, in hopes hereafter you may have a more Favourable Opinion of what you now so undervalue, you will scarce hear it named. Wherefore, for the present, I shall only wish you a
Good

Good Night ; assuring you, to borrow your Complement, *That in reference to all the Obligations of Justice and Charity (Nay, and Christianity too, a Word, under the Rose, you left out) I am*

Your Humble Servant,

Bristol, Jan. 28.

1722-3.

Peter Nisbett.

F I N I S.

